



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Confirmation of Appointments and Personnel Matters Committee

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, September 6, 2023

6:00 PM

The meeting took place virtually via Zoom and was called to order at 6:02 PM by Chair Pineda Neufeld and adjourned at 8:28 PM on a roll call vote of 4 in favor (Councilors Wilson, Strezo, Clingan and Pineda Neufeld), none against and 1 absent (Councilor Burnley).

Others present:

Chief Charles Femino – SPD, Cecilia Kelly – OSPCD, Housing Program Coordinator Paul Goldstein – OSPCD, Katie Gallant – Somerville Housing Authority, Director Anne Gill - Human Resources, Peter Forcellese – Legislative Clerk.

Roll Call

Present: Chairperson Judy Pineda Neufeld, Vice Chair Jesse Clingan, Kristen Strezo and Jake Wilson

Absent: Willie Burnley Jr.

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [23-1141](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Confirmation of Appointments and Personnel Matters Committee meeting of July 10, 2023.

RESULT: ACCEPTED

AYE: Chairperson Pineda Neufeld, Vice Chair Clingan, City Councilor At Large Strezo and City Councilor At Large Wilson

ABSENT: City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr.

2. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-1307](#)) Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Jennifer Tsolas to the Condominium Review Board.

Cecelia Kelly, from the Housing Department, introduced candidate Jennifer Tsolas and explained that this appointment would fill one of the Board vacancies occurring next month. Ms. Tsolas explained that she is being considered for full member status. She recounted her experience with being legally evicted to allow for a condo conversion of her apartment and said that she has been a fundraiser for housing issues for 20 years and remains active in community affairs. Ms. Tsolas told the members that it appeared to her that for some cases going before the Condo Review Board, enough outreach hadn't been performed, however, she noted that she doesn't really know what more could be done in this regard. As for her service on the Board, Ms. Tsolas said that she would love to increase the number of cases where tenants were actually contacted and felt

comfortable about appearing before the Board. She would also like to educate people about the CRB.

Chair Pineda Neufeld informed the candidate that this appointment would not be official until it is approved by the City Council (at its next meeting on September 14th).

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Pineda Neufeld, Vice Chair Clingan, City Councilor At Large Strezo and City Councilor At Large Wilson

ABSENT: City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr.

3. Mayor's Request
(ID # [23-1237](#))

Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Cassie Walston to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund.

Paul Goldstein, from OSPCD, introduced candidate Cassie Walston, who will be filling the vacant resident seat on the AHTF, which is currently the only open seat. Ms. Walston has experience with housing instability, is involved in the community and is eager to learn more about what the AHTF does. Ms. Walston said she would like to see more multi-generational families living in the city but said it's difficult to do in Somerville. She spoke about people buying multi-family homes through Section 8 and briefly spoke about a health equity change project she was involved in.

Chair Pineda Neufeld informed the candidate that this appointment would not be official until it is approved by the City Council (at its next meeting on September 14th).

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Pineda Neufeld, Vice Chair Clingan, City Councilor At Large Strezo and City Councilor At Large Wilson

ABSENT: City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr.

4. Mayor's Request
(ID # [23-1235](#))

Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Dennis Lemard to the Housing Authority Board of Commissioners.

Katie Gallant, from Somerville Housing Authority, introduced Dennis Lemard, a candidate to fill the union advocate seat for a 5-year term, which is the last vacant position on the Board. Mr. Lemard served as a shop steward during his employment with Hertz, has lived in Somerville for over 30 years, raised 2 children here, and is a homeowner. Mr. Lemard said that he had no experience with housing boards but told the members that affordable housing is the biggest issue facing the SHA and he hopes to make a big difference and give back to the community. Councilor Clingan urged

the candidate to speak up for tenants whenever necessary. Noting that the SHA does the best it can with the resources it has, Councilor Strezo spoke about complaints of mice, roaches and bedbug problems in SHA buildings and she asked how the candidate would advocate to fix those problem. Mr. Lemard replied that he would speak to the Board to see what could be done and he would talk with tenants. Asked about the stigma associated with living in SHA buildings, Mr. Lamar said that keeping properties clean and removing garbage would raise self esteem among tenants. Chair Pineda Neufeld noted that background information on the candidate was requested but was not forthcoming.

Chair Pineda Neufeld informed the candidate that this appointment would not be official until it is approved by the City Council (at its next meeting on September 14th).

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Pineda Neufeld, Vice Chair Clingan, City Councilor At Large Strezo and City Councilor At Large Wilson

ABSENT: City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr.

5. Mayor's Request
(ID # [23-1259](#))

Requesting confirmation of the promotion of Steven Scrugli to the position of Police Sergeant.

Chief Femino informed the committee that the city is in the process of hiring 8 police officers plus 2 additional officers to fill vacancies due to promotions. Those positions are funded in the department's budget. Director Gill stated that no civil service list candidates were bypassed.

Chief Femino introduced the candidate, Officer Steven Scrugli, who has been on the force for 5 years, is a field training officer, a member of the special response team, retired from the Army Reserve after 24 years of service and 4 deployments. Officer Scrugli grew up in Somerville, has family here and is fluent in Spanish.

The candidate was asked what he uses on the job from his crisis intervention team training (CIT), what trauma response means to him, reimagining policing and witnessing misconduct of a non-subordinate. Officer Scrugli stated that it's important to slow the incident down and to treat each person's experience as valid to them and try to find solutions. He commented that officers have to be 'a jack of all trades' and it would be nice to have a trained person present to help guide and assist them on some calls. He went on to say that he's still surprised with some of the things he's seen during his career. Every day presents a new challenge to help someone

and he’s excited to be a leader and a teacher and he’s cautious about transitioning to a new role and the added responsibility that comes with it.

After returning from Executive Session, this item was recommended for approval. Chair Pineda Neufeld informed the candidate that this appointment would not be official until it is approved by the City Council (at its next meeting on September 14th).

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: Chairperson Pineda Neufeld, Vice Chair Clingan, City Councilor At Large Strezo and City Councilor At Large Wilson

ABSENT: City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr.

6. Mayor's Request
(ID # [23-1258](#))

Requesting confirmation of the promotion of Samir Messaoudi to the position of Police Sergeant.

Chief Femino introduced the candidate, Acting Sergeant Samir Messaoudi, who has been on the force for 10 years, has military background, worked as corrections officer, has an Associates and Bachelor degrees, and is multi-lingual. Chief Femino noted that the candidate has taken on his leadership role well.

The candidate was asked what he uses on the job from his crisis intervention team training (CIT), what trauma response means to him, reimagining policing and witnessing misconduct of a non-subordinate.

Acting Sergeant Messaoudi said that it’s important to slow things down and try to get cooperation from people and he feels that having the assistance of trained professionals will be an asset in helping to deal with the number of mental health calls. He is excited to provide guidance to his colleagues, to support officers, and to continue learning.

After returning from Executive Session, this item was recommended for approval. Chair Pineda Neufeld informed the candidate that this appointment would not be official until it is approved by the City Council (at its next meeting on September 14th).

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: Chairperson Pineda Neufeld, Vice Chair Clingan, City Councilor At Large Strezo and City Councilor At Large Wilson

ABSENT: City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr.

7. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-1257](#)) Requesting confirmation of the promotion of Salvatore Fusco to the position of Police Lieutenant.

Chief Femino introduced the candidate, Acting Lieutenant Salvatore Fusco, who was appointed to the force in 1998. He is a graduate of Somerville High School, an Army veteran, and has been awarded a life saving medal as well as several others.

The candidate was asked what he uses on the job from his crisis intervention team training (CIT), what trauma response means to him, reimagining policing and witnessing misconduct of a non-subordinate.

Acting Lieutenant Salvatore Fusco commented that he has learned various ways to handle situations and believes that having professional assisting on calls is beneficial and another tool in the box. He said that he's seen a change in policing, i.e., its become more professional and he's excited about helping people and he's not afraid of having the added responsibility as long as he tries to make the right decisions.

After returning from Executive Session, this item was recommended for approval. Chair Pineda Neufeld informed the candidate that this appointment would not be official until it is approved by the City Council (at its next meeting on September 14th).

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Pineda Neufeld, Vice Chair Clingan, City Councilor At Large Strezo and City Councilor At Large Wilson

ABSENT: City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr.

8. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-1256](#)) Requesting confirmation of the promotion of Jeffrey DiGregorio to the position of Police Captain.

Chief Femino introduced the candidate, Acting Captain Jeffrey DiGregorio, who joined the force in 2001, was promoted to Sergeant in 2011, promoted to Lieutenant in 2015, and to Acting Captain in 2021. He holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Massachusetts and is a member of the Massachusetts Bar Association.

The candidate was asked what he uses on the job from his crisis intervention team training (CIT), what trauma response means to him, reimagining policing and witnessing misconduct of a non-subordinate.

Acting Captain DiGregorio commented that he was one of the first officers to get the CIT training and he learned to give people space and come in with a soft approach. He believes that it's important to keep police involved but thinks that the added professional help is worthwhile. He told the committee that he works with good men and women in the department and that the image is that police officers are tough but the humanity of the members in the department was a surprise. He's excited about having greater responsibility for people, budgets, and the larger scope of things that come with this position.

After returning from Executive Session, this item was recommended for approval. Chair Pineda Neufeld informed the candidate that this appointment would not be official until it is approved by the City Council (at its next meeting on September 14th).

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Pineda Neufeld, Vice Chair Clingan, City Councilor At Large Strezo and City Councilor At Large Wilson

ABSENT: City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr.

9. Mayor's Request
(ID # [23-1299](#))

Requesting confirmation of the promotion of Christopher J. Ward to the position of Deputy Police Chief.

Chief Femino introduced the candidate, Acting Deputy Chief Christopher Ward, who joined the department in 1988, was promoted to Sergeant in 2014, promoted to Lieutenant in 2016, promoted to Captain in 2018, became the Commander of the Crime Investigation Unit in 2019, and was promoted to Acting Deputy Chief in 2021. He holds 2 degrees and is the recipient of several awards.

The candidate was asked what he uses on the job from his crisis intervention team training (CIT), what trauma response means to him, reimagining policing, witnessing misconduct of a non-subordinate and what he's looking for in a new police chief.

Acting Deputy Chief Ward said the work he's done in this position is vastly different from prior positions he's held and that he's learned much more about the job. The most difficult part of his being a Lieutenant was reading the accreditation documents and formulating policies, but it was also the most gratifying. He was in the first CIT class offered and enjoyed the advance training, adding that it really helped in dealing with people by doing the right thing. He also took the CIT Chief's course that dealt with helping employees. Acting Deputy Chief Ward said a lot of time has been invested in alternative policing and he supports it. He's looking forward to learning from and supporting the efforts of a new police chief. He enjoys his job and

gets satisfaction from helping people and is excited by working with various city departments and is looking forward to co-response operations.

Chair Pineda Neufeld moved to enter executive session at 7:51 p.m. The motion was approved on a roll call vote of 4 in favor (Councilors Wilson, Strezo, Clingan and Pineda Neufeld), 0 opposed, 1 absent (Councilor Burnley). The regular committee recessed at 7:51 PM to enter into Executive Session.

The regular meeting reconvened at 8:13 PM. Chair Pineda Neufeld reported that no votes were taken in Executive Session except the vote to adjourn. Chief Femino told the members that these candidates are well qualified and that they have been using CIT training. He asked that they be approved.

This item was recommended for approval. Chair Pineda Neufeld informed the candidate that this appointment would not be official until it is approved by the City Council (at its next meeting on September 14th).

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Pineda Neufeld, Vice Chair Clingan, City Councilor At Large Strezo and City Councilor At Large Wilson

ABSENT: City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr.